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The Trail of Tears and Southern Illinois Parks

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The Trail of Tears was the long arduous path of the Cherokee nation during its forced removal from the ancestral home. This trail and the memories left behind played a critical role in the development of parks in southern Illinois. Several parks have been established along the trail as memorials to the Cherokee that passed through.

The Cherokee people, native to Georgia, Tennessee, and Alabama, were forced upon this trail from their homes to Oklahoma in the late 1830s. Since the time of early white settlers, the Cherokee had assimilated the transplanted European cultures and the newly developed American cultures rather well. Unfortunately, disputes began to arise over the Cherokees' claim to the land. The discovery of gold on Cherokee lands prompted many people to appeal to the national government for the removal and displacement of the Cherokee from their ancestral lands.

Initially, the Cherokee were able to hold their own against the onslaught of gold seekers and the unappreciative hand of Andrew Jackson, who relied heavily on the Cherokees during the Creek War. A Cherokee splinter group led by Major Ridge and his son John, called the Ridge Party, met with the federal government to discuss the idea of relocation. This meeting resulted in the creation of the New Echota Treaty which agreed to the removal of the Cherokee nation. Even though the Treaty was endorsed by a small minority of the Cherokee Nation, the federal government applied it indiscriminately and began the forced removal from ancestral lands.

As a part of this removal, the Cherokee people were granted $5 million and land in Oklahoma as compensation. Much of this money was required just to finance the trip from Georgia to Oklahoma. The Cherokee were taken advantage of on numerous occasions and this money was extremely inadequate.

The Cherokees began to make their way to their new lands. They had to travel through several states in order to get there. During the winter of 1838 and 1839, the Cherokees went through Southern Illinois entering around Golconda, passing by Jonesboro, Dixon Springs, and Vienna and then exiting near Dutch Creek Crossing. Each of these towns was affected and are now near state parks or forests with recreational facilities.

Near Golconda, many Cherokees made use of the local ferry. Under normal conditions, a ferry trip was only 12 ½ cents, but the owner of Berry's Ferry charged $1 for each person and made them wait for other customers. Some families took pity on the Cherokees such as that of Sarah Buel. Hungry Cherokees passed by her home and she graciously provided them with much needed food. Golconda lacks a major park, but is home to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources Golconda Marina, which offers many recreational activities. Camping, hiking, and fishing are all activities that are enjoyed there. Also, the Marina offers one of the better ports on the Ohio River for pleasure boaters.

The Trail of Tears State Forest, near Jonesboro, has many park-like aspects. It offers camping, hiking, and hunting with varieties of wildlife and plants that compete with any other local parks. This Forest was so named to honor and recognize the Cherokee people that rested within four miles of the forest between the winter of 1838

and 1839. Ice in the Mississippi made crossing virtually impossible and forced them to camp there. Many died of exposure and harsh conditions.

In Field Cemetery, just south of the Dixon Springs State Park lies a granite stone. It stands as a memorial to those that did not survive the brutal trek. Near Vienna rests a monument in memorial of several Cherokees that had been brutally murdered and their bodies thrown into shallow graves. Townspeople had murdered them and attempted to make profit by suing the government for the removal of the bodies. Nearby lies another state park.

The sorrowful path of the Trail of Tears, as it wound its way through Southern Illinois, left marks and memories that have lasted until today. These marks have helped with the development and emphasis on parks in the region. Memories tied communities together and played a critical role in awareness of the need to preserve the memories. Many of the towns that share the bond of the trail have prominent park or park-like facilities where many other southern Illinois towns do not. [From Elizabeth Antonacci, "The Trail of Tears: The Cherokee Tribe." <http://www.lib.niu.edu/ipo/2002/ihy020452.html>. (Sept. 30, 2006); "The Battle of Horseshoe Bend," *Just Around the Bend*. 3 July 2003. <http://www.nps.gov/archive/hobe/home/parkhistory.htm>. (Oct. 2, 2006); Christina Berrey, "Andrew Jackson- the Worst President the Cherokee Ever Met," *All Things Cherokee*. <http://www.allthingscherokee.com/atc_sub_culture_feat_events_020201.html>. (Sept. 29, 2006); "The Cherokee Trail of Tears," *National Historic Trail*. Apr. 28, 2005. <http://www.rosecity.net/tears/trail/tearsnht.html>. (Sept. 30, 2006); "Eastern Indian

Wars," *The Price of Freedom: Americans At War*. Smithsonian National Museum of American History. <http://www.americanhistory.si.edu/militaryhistory/printable/section.asp?id=3>. (Oct. 3, 2006); Stu Fliege, "The Trail of Tears in Illinois," The Heartland Magazine; Illinois Department of Natural Resources. <http://www.dnr.state.il.us/>. (Sept. 20, 2006); Gloria Jahoda, "Trail of Tears," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, (1950); John Musgraves, "Southern Illinois History Lost on Cherokee Trail of Tears," *John's Southern Illinois History Page*. 3 Jan. 1999. <http://www.illinoishistory.com/trailoftears.html>. (Sept. 30, 2006); Liz Pensoneau, "Wolfrider." 9 Apr. 2000. <http://www.lib.niu.edu/ipo/2000/oi000408.html>. (Oct. 4, 2006); "The Trail of Tears," <http://www.egyptianaaa.org/SI-Trail-of-Tears.htm>. (Sept. 20, 2006); "The Trail of Tears," *About Northern Georgia*. <http://www.ngeorgia.com/history/nghisttt.html>. (Sept. 28, 2006); "Trail of Tears State Forest," <http://www.quincynet.com/illinoisparks/TrailofTears.htm>. (Sept. 27, 2006); and "Walking the Trail of Tears," *Discover Marion*. <http://www.marionkentucky.us/Marion-Kentucky-trailoftears.htm>. (Oct. 5, 2006).]

Lowden State Park

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There is no doubt that Illinois State Parks have influenced our state's history. This idea of having state parks was a great idea. I live in the town of Oregon, Illinois and we are gifted with some beautiful parts in this little town. Out of all these parks, however, Lowden State Park has to be the most widely influential across the state.

Around 1829, John Phelps entered the Rock River Valley. This area was called Sinnissippi by the local Indians. Phelps had no intention of staying in this area, but the beauty of the bluffs near the rivers intrigued him. In the summer of 1833, Phelps hired a French guide who was employed with the fur company in the Rocky Mountains. They noted all the valley's potential resources. This areas was very wide open and safe for exploration because of the permanent dispossession of the Indians in 1832. They ran into a tent near a bank, which was erected by Colonel William Hamilton, son of Alexander Hamilton, who was an old friend of Phelps. William informed Phelps of a location about three miles west "that could not be surpassed in point of beauty." Phelps then went and checked it out, not needing any further persuasion. He remained long enough to raise a crop before he went and got his family, returning permanently in 1835. Many other people came to this beautiful area and settled. In 1869, this town was officially recognized as a city, Florence, which we know today as Oregon.

The beautiful area that Phelps spoke of is the location of Lowden State Park. A Chicago attorney by the name of Wallace Heckman, who was an assistant manager of the University of Chicago, purchased this land in 1898. He and his wife grew fond of the

outdoors while college students. The Heckmans became patrons of the arts back around the Chicago area. They took their two interests and put them together, making an artists' colony on their Rock River property. This colony was called "Eagles Nest," which referred to a tall, dead cedar tree that clung to the river bank. This tree inspired a poet Margaret Fuller to write a poem called, "Ganymede to His Eagle." The Eagles' Nest was home to many creative people for nearly 50 years. One of these artists included Lorado Taft, who created the Black Hawk statue. Taft was the moving spirit behind the colony, which flourished six years after Taft's death in 1942. In 1945, the Sixty-Third General Assembly designated the 273-acre site as Lowden State Park. The sixty-six acres that consisted of the actual Eagles' Nest were transferred to Northern Illinois University as a use for an outdoor teacher education program six years later.

Black Hawk statue is Lowden's most influential piece. Lorado Taft created this 50-foot tall statue as a tribute to Native Americans. The thought of creating this statue was said to come from one evening at the Eagles' Nest with other members, while they were staring at the view from the bluffs. Taft was helped by a young sculptor of the Chicago Art Institute named John G. Prasuhn. The statue has a six-foot base, and is reinforced with iron rods. The hollow statue is eight to three feet thick. Its weight is estimated to be around 100 tons, and thought to be the second largest monolithic statue in the world. The statue's original name, however, is "The Eternal Indian." Even though the statue is commonly associated with Black Hawk the Sauk Indian chief, Taft dedicated the statue to all Native Americans. The statue also does not look anything like Black Hawk, which is another proof that Taft wanted it to be for all Native Americans. "There he stands, as tall as the trees, The Eternal Indian, researching Oregon and its neighboring

communities, I thoroughly comprehend his vigilance, and the affectionate regard apparent in those massive features so carefully by his creator," describes the statue very well, and how people from the community and visitors from out of town see the statue.

This state park by the Lowden, in no doubt, has influenced the surrounding community of Oregon with its beauty. Lorado Taft looked upon this area of beauty, and thought of the idea of this great statue to honor the people who once settled this area. There are other parks in this area, but Lowden is by far the most widely influential. As a resident of Oregon, Illinois, I am proud to say that I see that statue every day and receive the privilege of seeing the beauty of the park, which others around the world will seldom or never get the chance to ever see. [From Keith Call, *Great Britain*; "Lowden State Park," *Illinois Department of Natural Resources*, <http://dnr.state.il.us/lands/Landmgt/PARKS/R1/LOWDENSP.HTM>. (Oct. 14, 2006); Paul Ricker, "Illinois State Parks," <http://www.astro.uiuc.edu/~pmricker/interests/outdoors/il-state-parks.html>. (Oct. 14, 2006); and Lindsay Shaw, Lowden-Miller State Forest.]

White Pines State Park

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Slightly outside of Oregon there lies a hidden treasure among the southern most tip of the white pine forests. It is a state park that lies within the valley between Polo and Oregon. Deeply steeped in a rich history, the area boasts the beauty of nature and luxury of cabins. The region is in the heart of Black Hawk Indian territory. Black Hawk's followers fought off many of the settlers until the Black Hawk War forced them out of their land. The park was created from the best interests of the people for the conservation of the natural resources of Ogle County. The park's many areas were the results of Depression-based government work camps, such as the CCC. White Pines is a home to many animals and flora that is found nowhere else in nature. Today the park offers many attractions to everyone. In all, the park is a great addition to Illinois and the surrounding communities.

The people in the surrounding community worked hard to preserve the southern-most region of white pine forests. White Pines forest was still just a plot of land until a group of conservationists in Ogle County petitioned for a state grant to build up the park. "This 700-acre forest of untouched pine extended for almost a ¼ mile" stated the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. The citizens pushed for legislature that would appropriate $30,000 for the purchase of the land. It was vetoed in 1903, but in 1927 they had more success. The area was sanctioned as a state park and achieved nature preservation status. Jens Jenson, who led several of these "conservational missions" explained the movement, "scenic regions posses little agricultural value, but much 'museum' value."

The Civilian Conservation Corps played a major role in improving the accessibility and comfort of the park. The era of this construction was during the Great Depression in the years of 1933 through 1939. This organization was created by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to supplement millions of young men across America with jobs. "enroll them in a peacetime army, and send them into battle against destruction and erosion of our natural resources" according to the National Association of Civilian Conservation Corps Alumni or (NACCCA). This government sanctioned public works project built many of the shelters, foot bridges, cabins, and the lodge. Although some of the materials came from as far away as the State of Washington, they incorporated many of the parks' natural features, such as native fieldstone and pine timbers up to 70 feet long. The original plan for the road construction was to have five bridges spanning Pine Creek. A more economic solution was to build fords or simple concrete upraising for cars to drive over. As written in the brochure, "Through the years this has proven to be one of the park's most unique features."

The park is home to an abundance of creatures. These "unglaciated woods" are home to many plants that exist nowhere else in the world. Some plants in this region are some of the few that are left in nature. Such examples are the white birch and the small yellow lady's-slipper. The animals home to this region include small mammals, and migratory birds. The woods provide a good home to any creature that lives there. Naturalist Michael Jeffords wrote, "[Northern Illinois] became known as the 'Driftless Area,' an island that had escaped the great continental glaciers." This let many animals survive the ice age and continue to today. The topography of tributaries such as Pine and

Spring creek adds to the ecosystem of the park, Jeffords described this also. "These and their tributaries form an intricate web . . . thickly carpeted with forests."

Today the park consists of many attractions for travelers and nature lovers. Seven hiking trails spanning over 5 miles of outdoor terrain, the park boasts of hikers being able to watch deer, if they are quiet. The original rustic cabins still remain after decades of use, this is where people write down and can read journals that others have left behind. The park was built because of community interest and the Depression. It has grown to attract many from Chicago and farther. Without community action, the southern most tip of the White Pines would be lost forever. [From Keith Call, *Images of American Oregon, Illinois*; Michael R. Jeffords, et al., *Illinois Wilds*; *Illinois, A Descriptive and Historical Guide*; and *White Pines Forest-State Park*. 2003. Illinois Department of Natural Resources. <http://dnr.state.il.us/lands/Landmgt/PARKS/R1/WHITEPNS.HTM>. (Oct. 15, 2006).]

The Experience of Fort Massac

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Alluring – what better way to describe the oldest state park in Illinois? This park has all the makings for a fun and interesting visit, with a replica of Fort Massac, a museum, and 1,450 acres of land to discover. This state park's history dates from before the United States even existed. In fact, the first time the fort's location had ever been used, it was not even fifty years after Columbus discovered America. This park holds the secrets of the battles for land, life, and the ability to say, "We win."

From 1539 to 1541, Hernando De Soto traveled across America in search of gold, silver, and jewels. According to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, in 1540 he and his crew set up a small fortification to protect themselves from the natives. According to their Web site, the Indians themselves "took advantage of its strategic location overlooking the Ohio River," as well as many other groups of people, including French, British, and American. The reason this spot is so special is because it overlooks the Ohio River. This means that one group cannot be completely surrounded by another; not only that, controlling Fort Massac means controlling the trade on the Ohio River, the peak of Europe's interest.

In 1756, Charles Philippe Aubry was ordered to erect a fort on the Ohio River. His commanding officer, Major de Makarty, had learned of a British plan to attack the French troops for control of the Ohio Valley. Completed June 20, 1757, the location got its first name: Fort De L'Ascension, meaning Fort of the Rise. This fort not only helped prevent the British attack, but also a Cherokee attack shortly after it was built. However,

this fort was not meant to last long. In Clarence W. Alvord's *Illinois Country*, he wrote: "The French had determined to burn the fort and abandon the upper Ohio valley." Thus, in November 1758, the French followed through, and the British took control of the valley, "although for several years its possession was disputed by the Indians," Alvord wrote. In 1759, some Shawnee, assisting in protecting Fort De L'Ascension, retreated to Fort de Chartres for fear that the French would try to retake the fort. While the British were preparing to take over all of the Illinois territory, Makarty found out, and ordered General Villiers to reconstruct the fort, and rename it Fort Massiac, "in honor of the Marquis de Massiac, Minister of Marine," according to Brevet's *Illinois Historical Markers and Sites*. In 1763, the French lost the fort to the British under the Treaty of Paris after the Seven Years' War. Not wanting to give up their special spot, the French burned the fort to the ground, and when Captain Thomas Stirling came to take claim of the land found a burned ruin.

Until 1794, Fort Massac, remained unbuilt. By this time, America had become a nation, and George Washington was president. He ordered General Anthony Wayne to rebuild it. On October 20, 1803, it was completed, and for the next twenty years the fort was used to protect American troops. On November 11, 1803, Lewis and Clark stayed at Fort Massac on their expedition through the Louisiana Territory. In the summer of 1805 Aaron Burr met with General James Wilkinson to make plan for conquering the Southwest. In 1811, the fort was nearly destroyed by the New Madrid earthquake. Rebuilt a year later to assist with the War of 1812, it was deserted again in 1814, and by 1828 hardly anything remained of the original construction because people had taken pieces out of it. It was not for many years that the fort would see any respect.

That year was 1903. The Daughters of the American Revolution purchased the site including 24 acres around it. By November 5, 1908, it was officially Illinois' first state park. In 1939 it was decided to rebuild Fort Massac, but this remained uncompleted for many years as a result of World War II. In the early 1970s, the 1794 American version of the fort stood as a representation of the layers of time. This lasted until the fall of 2002 when it was torn down to make room for the 1802 version of Fort Massac. Completed in 2003, the park is now a place for all kinds of family activities, including picnicking, camping, hiking, and boating.

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources also calls Fort Massac State Park a "complete . . . family vacation spot." However, there is much more to this park; it is the fervent reminder of the foundation of history that cannot be changed. This reminder becomes reality for its visitors every October, during the Fort Massac Encampment. "This re-creation of the lifestyles and atmosphere of the late 1700's attracts more than 80,000 people," claims the Department of Natural Resources. Thus, people visiting during this event can be reminded: though times have changed, and things are different, one thing that remains at the end of the day is history, and that is one thing America can count on. [From Clarence W. Alvord, *Illinois Country, 1673-1818*, *Brevet's Illinois Historical Markers and Sites*; Department of Natural Resources, "Fort Massac," <dnr.state.il.us/land/landmgt/PARKS/Rf/frmindex.thm>. (Oct. 15, 2006); National Park Service, "Lewis and Clark Expedition: Fort Massac Site," <www.cr.nps.gov/nr/travel/lewisandclark/mas.htm>. (Oct. 15, 2006); and QuincyNet.com, "Fort Massac State Park," <www.quincynet.com/illinoisparks/FortMassac.htm>. (Oct. 15, 2006).]

Millennium Park

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The popularity of recreational parks is something that has stood the test of time. In fact, parks can be traced from the Hanging Gardens of Babylon in the Middle East to the Victorian style parks in Europe. Parks not only started as a way to improve the health of people in overcrowded, congested cities, but also to beautify the cities, thus making them more attractive to tourists. Over time, many cities in Illinois have managed to use open space as room for parks. One of these parks is located in the heart of Chicago: Millennium Park. Millennium Park has proved itself, not only an important contribution to Chicago history, but to Illinois history as well. Millennium Park's open and modern design breathes new life into downtown Chicago and provides the city with a center for recreation and entertainment.

It was originally Daniel Burnham's idea to have a park in front of Chicago's waterfront. This idea was revealed in his book about the future of Chicago, *Daniel Burnham's Plan of Chicago*, published in 1909. In 1997, Chicago's mayor, Richard M. Daley, re-invigorated Burnham's plan for a park near Chicago's waterfront. He planned for it to be a redeveloped portion of the already made Grant Park and began construction in 1998. The new park, named Millennium Park in light of its planned opening in 2000, was intended to cost around one hundred and eighty million dollars. Instead, the 24.5 acre park did not have its grand opening until 2004 due to delays and cost taxpayers three times more than expected. The final expenditure was a whopping five hundred million dollars.

Despite the criticism about delays and going over budget, Millennium Park is still looked at as the heart of Chicago. Decorated with beautiful postmodern architecture, Millennium Park is far greater than the average park. More than anything, this park is recognized as a lively place to be at with a very open environment. The park contains an ice skating rink, a concert theater for music and dance, numerous plazas, Cloud Gate, Crown Fountain, Lurie Garden, and Jay Pritzker Pavillion. Besides playing in the open space of the park, visitors can also go to concerts at the Pritzker Pavilion which seats 11,000 people. In addition to concerts, people who visit Millennium Park may also view the park's artwork from two fifty-foot video screens at Crown Fountain. Other significant events in the park include political rallies, peace demonstrations, and many private and publicly sponsored programs to benefit children. With so many forms of entertainment and opportunities to get together, running out of things to do at Millennium Park seems very unlikely.

Millennium Park becomes much more than a park, not only to its Chicago citizens, but to anyone that has ever been there. The number of people that visit this great park annually is a booming fifteen million. According to the *New York Times*, Millennium Park is one of Chicago's leading attractions; a recent article stated that the park is responsible for one and one-quarter billion dollars worth of residential development in the Chicago area. The park's influence on Chicago is the sole reason that business has grown so dramatically in the East Chicago area. Businesses want to build their headquarters in a place where they can be guaranteed there will be a big crowd. Although Millennium Park was designed in 1909, today it has turned into much more. This revolutionary park is among the best in the country and is on its way to truly

impacting Illinois history in the many years to come. Chicago would not be the same city without its central playground. Millennium Park provides Illinois with a place for recreation, exercise, entertainment, learning, and overall a unity for all different kinds of people to get together and have fun. [From "Chicago Millennium Park," *Chicago Traveler*. <http://chicagotraveler.com/chicago_millennium_park.htm>. (Oct. 5, 2006); Timothy J. Gilfoyle, *Millennium Park*; "How a Park Changed a Chicago Neighborhood," *New York Times*. <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/06/04/realestate/04nati.html>. (Sept. 30, 2006); and "Millennium Park Chicago," *Millennium Park*. <http://www.millenniumpark.org/>. (Oct. 5, 2006).

Castle Rock State Park

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Parks in Illinois have influenced history in many ways. Castle Rock State Park is a park about 3 miles south of Oregon on Route 2. The site for it was picked by a group called "Friends of Our Native Landscape" in 1921. Castle Rock is a nature preserve. It has beautiful scenery and you can picnic, hike, fish, and hunt there. Castle Rock State Park consists of approximately 2,000 acres.

State parks have influenced Illinois history because they get people to come together. Dr. Ted Flickinger states, "In the mid-1800s in Chicago, citizens on all sides of the growing city were banding together to preserve public parks and recreational areas." Chicago was one of the first places to start parks in Illinois. In 1888, 32 residents from Quincy formed the Quincy Boulevard and Park Association and lobbied hard for public tax levies to acquire and maintain parks. Peoria citizens were the first to petition for official park commission status. Flickinger stated, "Citizens involvement is no less prevalent or important today." In all these situations people in a community have come together to help preserve nature.

The first people to promote parks were Jens Jenson and Dwight Perkins. Jenson "was a leader in the movement that originated both the forest preserve system and the state park system in Illinois," according to Jane and Dean Sheaffer. Jenson and Perkins cared about the native landscape. Illinois has a limited number of unique natural areas and unspoiled woodlands, rivers and prairies were growing scarce. They wanted to "help preserve and protect high quality natural areas," according to Grant Afflerbaugh, park

supervisor. Jenson and Perkins helped organize the Chicago Playground Association. They would have "Saturday Afternoon Walking Trips." These were to help pay for the parks. In 1913 Perkins got the legislature to enable the forest preserve system. The next year voters approved formation of Cook County Forest Preserve District. Which lead to the beginning of now 13 districts. Sheaffer wrote, "the intent of the regional plan was to make Chicago a better place to live and preserve outstanding natural resources such as native ecological communities, bluffs, rivers, prairies and woods." In Jenson's opinion, "The object of park reservations is to preserve scenic beauty in Illinois in its primitive form and hold it as a heritage for generations yet unborn."

The Friends of Our Native Landscape were the people who started Castle Rock State Park. Of the 20 sites proposed to become parks, 9 were eventually acquired all or in part by the state as scenic and recreational parks and 3 as state historic parks. The park was developed during the Great Depression; hence, getting money must have been hard. It was also hard to get legislation to protect the area. The old way of having historic and scenic parks was over. In 1951, the state parks merged into the Department of Conservation and most new sites for two decades were multi-use recreational facilities. Sheaffer wrote, "the new philosophy would also impact the older scenic parks, refitting them to serve increasing recreational, camping, and lodging needs at the expense of wilderness."

Before Castle Rock was started "the region was inhabited by Illinois tribes of native Americans until Sauk and Fox tribes being pushed westward by colonists invaded in 1730," according to the brochure for Castle Rock State Park. Blackhawk, a Sauk chief, led his people into raids to get their land back. In 1832 he was captured and forced

to live on a reservation. Then the Castle Rock area was settled by New Englanders in the nineteenth century. When Castle Rock State Park was first started, the land was mostly in private ownership.

There are a few programs started to fund Castle Rock State Park. "In 1964, the Natural Lands Institute, a non-profit natural lands preservation group, conducted a public fund-raising campaign to preserve part of the Castle Rock area," according to a sesquicentennial history of Illinois. Most of the money comes from the Department of Natural Resources. It is made for the benefit of everybody in the state so the state pays for it. Funding is provided by tax revenue from hunting and fishing licenses.

To reiterate, parks have influenced Illinois history because they bring people together. Jensen and Perkins were the people who first promoted parks in Illinois. The parks were formed to preserve and protect high quality natural areas. [From "Castle Rock State Park," The Story of Oregon, Illinois Sesquicentennial 1836-1986; Grant Afflerbaugh. E-mail. Oct. 2, 2006; Dr. Ted Flickinger, Ph.D., "It All Starts With Citizens," September/October 1998. <http://131.156.59.13/ipo/1998/ip980924.html.> (Oct. 6, 2006); Illinois Department of Natural Resources, *Castle Rock State Park*; and Jane and Dean Sheaffer, "Designers of Our State Parks and Forest Preserve Systems." *Illinois Parks and Recreation*.]

The Largest Park in Illinois

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The largest state park in the state of Illinois, Pyramid State Park, is located in Perry County, Pinckneyville, Illinois, not far from where I live. Pyramid State park is one of the best-kept secrets because people often think Pere Marquette in the Alton area is the largest park in Illinois.

Originally, Pyramid State Park only covered 924 acres; however, today it consists of over 19,000 acres. Southern Illinois University, which owned the property, initially used the 924 acres for research. In 1968 Southern Illinois University donated the 924 acres to make it a state park. After the college was so generous, the Governor George H. Ryan bought over 16,000 acres to give to Pyramid State Park.

Pyramid State Park was named after a large coal mining business that operated in the area. Experts say that the first whites to discover coal were Jolliet and Marquette in LaSalle County. The Native Americans used much of the coal for their by-products, using coal in pottery making. Strip mining, or as it is called today, open cut mining, was used in the early 1800s. A team of horses pulled a plow taking off the first layer of soil. Miners would then follow with picks, shovels, and wheelbarrows to pick up the coal. After many years of piling up rock and soil, the Illinois reclamation law of 1962 came into effect.

The most common way of reclamation during this time was through tree planting. Even though this would not bring any quick economic return for the park, nevertheless, hundreds of trees were planted. On the west side of the park is a twenty-acre area that

had never been strip-mined, where you can find a hardwood timber consisting of white oak and hickory.

As one wanders about the park, there are many wildlife species that can be seen including songbirds, deer, squirrels, beavers, rabbits, turkeys, bobcats, raccoons, possums, coyotes, weasels, woodchucks, wits, and minks. Some of these creatures are dangerous and some are not.

You will find hiking trails, visitors sitting down enjoying a picnic, camping, fishing, hunting and boating, which you can all do at the Pyramid State Park. As for trails, there are 16.5 acres around the park where you can hike or ride your horse.

However, the most popular activity at the park is hunting, and that is how I discovered Pyramid State Park. The park includes archery, firearm, muzzleloader and handgun hunting for white tail deer, and if you visit during springtime, turkey hunting is an option. Other species that can be hunted include rabbit, quail, and waterfowl.

The current acreage in Pyramid State Park is separated into two hunting areas; the main park of the park is the East Conant Hunting Area. This area allows for traditional hunting, and is one of the state's quality hunting sites including several thousand acres that had never been mined. When visiting this area you will find hundreds of fenced rows and wooded areas.

Deer hunters are only allowed to shoot white-tailed deer that have a minimum of four-points on each side. These rules are in place to protect young deer. Limiting the number of hunting days helps increase the wildlife populations, including some extremely large bucks.

One of the hobbies that I enjoy is fishing, and Pyramid State Park has plenty of fishing lakes. More than five hundred acres of water is available at the Pyramid State Park. In many acres of the park, lakes formed that vary in size from one-tenth of an acre to two hundred seventy-six acres. Anglers will find largemouth bass and bluegill in most of the ponds and lakes. There is also good fishing for crappie and redear sunfish. Many of the lakes are stocked annually with channel catfish. Since most of the lakes can only be reached by foot, it gives fishermen an opportunity to enjoy nature and get away from the crowds.

Pyramid State Park is an excellent vacation spot for any family. Over 200,000 visitors a year come to the park, and, with the new expansion and opportunities, it is expected that the number will triple in the next few years. Giving a family a chance to enjoy the outdoors and a peaceful vacation has made Pyramid State Park very successful. Also, it is only a few hours drive from some major cities including St. Louis, Paducah, Peoria, Springfield (Illinois), Evansville and Memphis. [From Bill Bailey, *Illinois State Parks*; Lonnie Russel, Richard Goldstein and Les Winkeler, *Enjoy Southern Illinois*; Lynn Soli and Barbara McCaig, *Illinois Parks and Forests*; <http://DNRLinks_State_Parks_South_RS>; <http://www.dnr.state.il.us/lands/Landmgt/hunter_fact_sheetRSHFS/pyr.htm>; and <http://www.dnr.state.il.us/orc/wpf/>.]

The Impact of Wildlife Prairie Park on Peoria

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Parks are places in which children are able to play while their parents are relaxing and taking a breath of fresh air. Though recreation is one purpose, state parks also have many other purposes. Wildlife Prairie Park is an example of a park that has multiple intentions. Its goals are to conserve, educate others about nature, and to provide a clean and enjoyable atmosphere. Though the park itself looks simple and uncomplicated, its history is intricate. As a result, Wildlife Prairie Park is viewed by many as simply a reserve for animals, but by examining its complex past and countless struggles, one will see how it has shaped Peoria history.

Throughout the years, Wildlife Prairie Park has faced many challenges and obstacles. Examples are competition, employment, and funding. What proved to be the most difficult challenge for Wildlife Prairie Park, however, was the state turnover. Since its founding in 1978, Bill Rutherford, the park's founder and owner, had been striving to transfer Wildlife Prairie to the state. This, however, was complicated due to several factors. The first was cost. Another conflict that extended the time for the takeover was a misunderstanding between Bill Rutherford and the park district. The disagreement was mainly on the terms for the takeover by the state park district and what appeared to be disinterest in the property. The people also created an issue. Some believed that Wildlife Prairie Park lacked 'national significance' for it to be a state park. Those problems, hold-ups, and differences had negative effects on Wildlife Prairie Park. Initially, it failed to become an affiliate of the National Park Association in 1987. Because it was denied state

status, Wildlife Prairie Park remained virtually unknown outside of Peoria. The lack of publicity was a negative effect mainly because Peoria's tourism decreased. Closure was a great possibility then because the park cost the Forest Park Foundation more than what the foundation was gaining, and Rutherford could have decided to let the park go. The closing of Wildlife Prairie Park would have changed Illinois in many ways. To begin with, closing one of Peoria's biggest attractions would result in a loss of tourism dollars in the state. Additionally, the state would have to spend more money on the park because it could not be left unattended.

In order to end the conflicts and to make Wildlife Prairie Park acknowledged state-wide, the park board and Bill Rutherford compromised. The compromise was that Wildlife Prairie Park would not be an official state park as of yet, but they would publicize it through publication, broadcast, and other means of promotion. Next, the park district and Rutherford worked out funding solutions. A funding structure, which planned to make Wildlife Prairie Park a part of a tax-supported base directed through a zoological society that corresponded with other legislators and previous government structures was constructed. Another solution that was tried was newly designed license plates. By selling these plates, Wildlife Prairie Park received a percentage from the total cost of each plate; the money was then used for park renovations, to minimize the deficit amount, and to keep the park running. These solutions were important then because with the funding solutions being made, the possibility of Wildlife Prairie Park becoming a state park was possible.

With the compromises, solutions, and many years of hard work, Bill Rutherford and Wildlife Prairie Park reached its goal. After over two decades of hardship and

challenges, Wildlife Prairie Park finally became Hazel and Bill Rutherford's Wildlife Prairie State Park on September 5, 2000. This final turnover gave Wildlife Prairie State Park many new options and chances. To start, it received more publicity and visitors. It was also able to get assistance with advertisements, repairs, administrating, and financial issues. Although it was now a state park, the Forest Park Foundation continued to support Wildlife Prairie State Park. This change in ownership matters because in being a state park, Wildlife Prairie State Park gets more exposure. It also enables the park to expand and add more activities. Further improvements in its facilities also encouraged visitors to comes to this Peoria attraction.

Many questioned if Wildlife Prairie Park made a difference at all in Peoria history. Those doubts were ended when the park's economic impact on the city and perhaps the state became evident. An average of 200,000 visitors come to Wildlife Prairie Park each year. When those tourists come to the park, Illinois' tourist percentage increases. Additionally, those initially coming to see the park are able to get a view of the city of Peoria. The park not only promotes itself, it also promotes and publicizes other areas in Peoria and the state of Illinois.

In conclusion, Wildlife Prairie Park is viewed by many as simply a reserve for animals, but by examining its complex past and countless struggles, it has shaped Peoria history. Perseverance made what Wildlife Prairie Park is today. And because it stood its ground through the tough times, people across the country are able to look at a part of Illinois history. As Wildlife Prairie Park gets more well-known, more people from different places are getting to know all that the state has to offer. This is an instance which shows that the parks are one of many ways to share and promote places. [From

Dayna R. Brown, "Wildlife Prairie Park to Receive $50,000 from State," *Peoria Journal Star*, May 30, 1996; Adriana Colinders, "Cost of Running Wildlife Prairie Park Kept District from Purchase," *Peoria Journal Star*, May 11, 1995; Adriana Colinders, "New Plates to Benefit Wildlife Prairie Park," *Peoria Journal Star*, Feb. 26, 1997; Elaine Hopkins, "Strike Hits Wildlife Prairie Park After Managers Fired," *Peoria Journal Star*, Oct. 11, 1983; Claire Howard, "Park Handoff May Be Underway," *Peoria Journal Star*, Jan. 21, 2000; Claire Howard, "Park Swap May Boost Tourism to Peoria Area," *Peoria Journal Star*, May 12, 2000; Evan Roth, "Panel Rejects Park Service Affiliation for Wildlife," *Peoria Journal Star*, June 12, 1987; Michael Smothers, "Rutherford Offers Park to Public," *Peoria Journal Star*, Dec. 24, 1993; Michael Smothers, "Wildlife Park Accepted with 'Ifs'," *Peoria Journal Star*, Jan. 21, 1994; State News Service. "Michel to Reintroduce Wildlife Prairie Park National Status Bill," *Peoria Journal Star*, Oct. 22, 1986; and Wildlife Prairie State Park. *Wildlife Prairie State Park History*. <http://www.wildlifeprairiestatepark.org/generalinformation/History.htm>. (Sept. 10, 2006.)]

Bradley Park

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Although Peorians believe Laura Bradley Park was merely founded as a playground, it has influenced Peoria's history, recreation, beauty, and fine arts. It is essential to know who founded this influential landmark. The amazing woman who is behind the discovery of the park was Lydia Moss Bradley, born in Vevay, Indiana in 1816. Moss Bradley moved to Peoria in her later years and there married Tobias Smith Bradley. With Tobias Smith Bradley, she had six children. Each child died before reaching the age of twenty. Though she was saddened by the children's deaths, she refused to dwell on them forever and remained happy by busying herself and providing for the city of Peoria. It was significant that Moss Bradley did not stay in the state she was born in because Indiana may have benefited from all of her contributions rather than Peoria. Years later, Tobias Smith Bradley passed away, and Moss Bradley once again went through a period of depression. In the end, she arrived at the same conclusion that she came to after her children's deaths, that she should not waste time shedding tears. Instead, she busied herself by doing great deeds for Peoria, one of which would soon happen, the founding of Laura Bradley Park. In 1894, the park was finally established.

Furthermore, Lydia Moss Bradley founded the park for several reasons including her love for land, the effect her family's deaths had on her, and because she was simply generous. The most urgent reason behind the discovery was her undying love for the land. She cared very much for the land in Peoria and did not wish for it to be polluted and harmed. Therefore, she founded a park where the land would be enjoyed and treated

properly. Unlike some of the other places in Peoria, the grass and flowers in Laura Bradley Park is beautiful because they are well kept and cared for correctly. Another reason behind Laura Bradley Park's discovery was her family members' impact on her. Her husband helped her financially so she had enough money to buy the extra land. The final explanation for the existence of Laura Bradley Park is she was so generous and kind, she decided to found a park.

Laura Bradley Park was officially founded in 1881. The park was named in honor of Lydia Moss Bradley's longest-living child, Laura Bradley, who lived to the mere age of nineteen. She offered the Park District several acres for use as a park; nonetheless, the land remained untouched for thirteen entire years. Each year, Lydia Moss Bradley increased her loan size a small amount and each year the number of acres of land she offered increased and this permanently changed the size of Bradley Park. Finally, in 1894, the park district accepted the offer and Laura Bradley Park was then available to the public. When the park was first unveiled, it contained seven entrances, allowing many people into the park more conveniently. In addition, inside Bradley Park, there was a zoo, a fun house, and a train. Certainly, Laura Bradley Park was one of the most entertaining spots in Peoria, filled with recreational activities and a plethora of fine arts including shows. The public was very pleased because Laura Bradley Park was one of the few public parks in Peoria. Moss Bradley also forbid drinking or smoking in the park in order to keep the land clean. Another person behind the establishment of the park was Oscar F. Dubuis. Dubuis designed this lovely park and the success of Bradley Park encouraged him to go on and design more parks for Peoria, such as Glen Oak Park and so forth. Dubuis has been a very influential man to Peoria.

Year after year, buildings, monuments, and attractions were added to the park. Some of these additions had great impact on Peorians who commonly visited the park. In 1955, Cornstock Theater transferred to Bradley Park. It provides thousands of dollars for Bradley Park each year so more attractions can be added. In 1922, a Japanese garden and a Japanese bridge were installed. The Japanese bridge is considered a landmark and has attracted several tourists to Peoria, providing the city with hundreds of dollars. The Japanese garden has made Bradley Park one of the most gorgeous and beautiful locations in Peoria. Not only were there huge installments in the park, there were important events that occurred. The park was not officially completed until 1905. Ten years were spent renovating, constructing, and designing this park. During the 1960s, the Main Street entrance permanently closed and an entrance opened on Parkside Drive. The layout of the park was permanently changed. Soon enough, the park district gained complete possession of Bradley Park. This was a smart decision because the Peoria Park District has taken fantastic care of the park.

Finally, inside the park there are several places and structures that make Laura Bradley Park and even Peoria unique. Aforementioned, in the 1920s, the Japanese bridge was constructed along with the Japanese gardens. For certain, Bradley Park is the only park in Illinois that contains Japanese themes. Frederic J. Klein drew the plans for the bridge. Years ago, near the Japanese bridge and garden there was a wading pool adaptable to a skating rink. During the summer, the two-foot deep pool served as a wading pool for people to swim and splash in. In the winter, the water in the wading pool froze and it transformed into a skating rink. Hundreds of Peorians learned how to swim and skate in this pool and rink. Some of Peoria's greatest swimmers may have learned

how to swim there. The wading pool and the Japanese themes may show uniqueness; however, there are more activities in the park such as tennis courts, baseball fields, picnic areas, and the fact that it is next to Bradley University. Most visitors of Bradley Park come from the University across the street. Students take advantage of having a park across the street for exercising, jogging its trails, and sitting at a picnic table near the beautiful scenery while they study. [From Illinois Alive, *About Laura Bradley*. <http://www.illinoisalive.info/lydia-page1.htm>. (Sept. 10, 2006); "Building Bradley Park was Slow Work," *Peoria Journal Star*, June 24, 1978; Historic Peoria, *Bradley Park*, <http://www.historicpeoria.com/entry.php?eid=181&catid=2&cid=1>. (Sept. 3, 2006); "Bradley Park Entrance to Close," *Peoria Journal Star*, Oct. 14, 1965; Frank Kenny, "It'll be Logs, Roads for Bradley Park," *Peoria Journal Star*, Dec. 6, 1964; Theo Jean Kenyon, "Bradley Park in Danger of Becoming Private?," *Peoria Journal Star*, Mar. 27, 1980; Theo Jean Kenyon, "Ghosts of Glen Oak," *Peoria Journal Star*, Sept. 4, 2006; Jerry Klein, *Peoria*; Theresa W. Lusch, "Bradley Park: Past and Present," *West Bluff Word*, Apr. 1980; "New Highway to Cut Through About 13 Acres of Bradley Park," *Peoria Journal Star*, May 19, 1957; Peoria Historical Society, *Bradley Park*; Peoria Journal Star, *Peoria. . . Impressions of 150 Years*; Steve Strahler, "Who let the Demon in?," *Peoria Journal Star*, Mar. 7, 1976; Allen A. Upton, *Forgotten Angel*; and Monica Vest Wheeler and Steve Wilkinson, *The Grandest Views*.]

Glen Oak Park

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A lovely park was once built with lush gardens, forests, and many fun activities. All of Peoria came to see it; nobody wanted to miss out. It was organized by the best engineers and landscapers. This park was soon declared a favorite in Peoria. It always provided a place for citizens to go to relax and unwind. This park was Glen Oak Park. Since 1896, Glen Oak Park has been a "people's park," providing citizens with activities and programs; therefore, much of its history relates to the citizens of Peoria, their families and their lives.

The Peoria park system was established in 1893 with the purchase of "Birkett Hollow," which had seventy-two acres. Glen Oak Park was officially opened and dedicated on September 7, 1896. When it opened, over 30,000 people attended its dedication. The park was greatly appreciated by the citizens of Peoria. Over 51,000 visited it the first year it was open. Even after several other parks were established, such as Bradley Park, Lincoln, Detweiller, Glen Oak was still considered the most popular. People enjoyed Glen Oak because it contained the most facilities to use. By 1899, concerts, picnics, and miscellaneous excursions drew over 135,995 visitors from June to October, again proving that Glen Oak was very popular. Oscar F. DuBuis was the one chosen to create Glen Oak Park. Because he was chosen, Glen Oak was looked upon as a majestic park with "metropolitan airs." He was selected in 1894 and was also the first park engineer and landscape gardener. Of course, they meant that he was the best choice to design Glen Oak Park. He was admired by many; hence, when he was chosen, the

citizens of Peoria felt they were in good hands. After Glen Oak was built, the Peoria County Old Settlers Association started a campaign to raise money for a double log cabin. They went to work quickly, trying to get an addition in as soon as possible. One of the cabins was to be a pioneer dwelling and the other, a museum. These cabins would be accessible to citizens, after they were finished. Here they could learn more about their culture. After the plans for the cabins were complete, the Peoria County Old Settlers Association asked citizens to pay $3 for logs for the cabins. On April 21, 1897, "Log Cabin Day," construction started. The Glen Oak conservatory was a place to which people flocked.

Towards the end of World War I, the park board decided to make a ten-acre addition to the north. This would be a place for planting trees. These trees would be a memorial for the soldiers of World War I that died. Most of these trees were killed because of a Dutch elm blight during the 1940s. Many fountains were at Glen Oak; at the Perry Street entrance, where colored lights glowed at night, and at the sunken garden along Prospect and outside the Palm House. These features could have been admired by many more people, if only they were kept. The fountains were among the most popular destinations. An observation tower was complete by 1906 and offered a view twenty to thirty miles in any direction. This was heavily used to take pictures for postcards. It may have been comparable to Tower Park in Peoria Heights, which is a rare beauty.

The Glen Oak Pavilion was an instant success. This brought the community together and allowed them to use this space for much more than parties. These community activities were very special. The Park Boards report stated that year, "The building is in charge of a caterer who serves meals, luncheons, ice cream, coffee, candies,

cigars. At any and all times at a reasonable cost. During the past winter (1896-97) the dancing hall has been used quite frequently by parties for dances, socials, and banquets." Although Glen Oak had many different features, statues did not appear until the turn of the century. Statues can be seen as amazing works of art, depriving the citizens of this luxury could make them feel empty. The famous Glen Oak lagoon was excavated at the turn of the century. Work was started in 1898 to transform a ravine into a man-made lagoon that would cover four and a quarter acres. This was called Rose Island. It was the new spot for fishing and boating and you did not have to go all the way to the river. Over a long distance, a walkway was constructed with benches and drinking fountains. The Ernest H. Wilson Garden and Plant Study Club, after it organized in 1931, worked on their first project: the memorial garden. When this garden was flooded, a new site was chosen, just north of the present conservatory. It is more widely known today as The Luthy Botanical Garden. Peoria, along with few other cities in the United States, received captured siege guns from the Spanish-American War.

Since 1896, Glen Oak Park has been a people's park, providing citizens with activities and programs; therefore, much of its history relates to the citizens of Peoria, their families, and their lives. Although it may not seem like it, Glen Oak really did influence the people of Peoria. Without it, the park phenomenon would not have started until much later. Therefore, the people of Peoria relied on Glen Oak to bring about a new generation of entertainment. Peoria had become a better, more prosperous city, in the end, leaving a great legacy. [From Theo Jean Kenyon, "Glen Oak Park 'A People's Park'—85 Years Old," *The Journal Star*, Sept. 6, 1981; Theo Jean Kenyon, "Glen Oak Park: A People Place," *The Journal Star*, Sept. 25, 1983; Theo Jean Kenyon, "Ghosts of

Glen Oak, *The Journal Star*, Oct. 4, 2006; Pat Landen, "Glen Oak Park Provides Bits and Pieces of Peoria History," *The Journal Star*, July 24, 1985; and Vivere Research. "Historic Peoria." *Historic Peoria*, <http://www.historicpeoria.com/entry.php?eid=197&catid=2&cid=1>. (Sept. 7, 2006).]

Lowden State Park

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No matter what town you travel through in Illinois, you will find at least one park. Illinois is the leading state in independent park districts, with over 370 today. The quality of the park lands and forest preserves have earned Illinois its reputation of having the best public parks and forest preserves in the United States. Illinois park districts have won twice as many National Gold Medal Awards than any other state in the nation. Parks are an important aspect of most people's lives today. We walk our dogs, exercise, picnic, hike, play and so many other activities that we all take for granted. We are lucky to have places to escape our busy lives and relax in the peaceful nature. How did all these parks get started?

Illinois has benefited from its award winning park system since 1869. Shortly after the Civil War, large and small cities began setting aside land, which usually took the form of the public square or a market. But in time, courthouses, town halls and other public buildings took over. Since residents in the Industrial Revolution had few opportunities to seek open space because of the factories, they created parks. The parks were meant to serve as a get away from the horrible conditions in the city. The awakening social concern and the economic promise that parks offered, led to the growth of parks and park districts. Beginning in 1867, the city of Chicago persuaded the Illinois legislature to grant permission to create park improvement commissions, which is what led to the expansion of park districts. According to Malcolm Cairns, associate professor in the Department of Landscape Architecture at Ball State University, "This heritage of

legislation . . . has given the state of Illinois a landscape of public open space and recreation grounds unique in America." From 1870 to 1930, more than 60 Illinois park districts and lands were established. Today park districts and forest preserves number greater than 370, which shows that "There's a lot more to Illinois than cornfields and Lincoln."

One of the most picturesque sites along the Rock River is Lowden State Park, just north of Oregon in Ogle County. The park was established to allow visitors to share the beauty, which is why "It doesn't take much effort to imagine why the Indians fought so valiantly to save this enchanting valley for their people," according to author Evelyn Heinz. What separates Lowden from other parks in the area is its rich history. The park land was purchased in 1898 by Wallace Heckman, a significant Chicago attorney. Heckman and his wife had developed a love of the outdoors while studying art. They invited a group of artists from Chicago to use their site to paint. They formed a colony and adapted the name "Eagles Nest" from a dead cedar tree in which eagles once nested. The colony lasted for nearly 50 years as a home for well-noted artists of that time; one of the most famous is Lorado Taft. The colony slowly declined after Taft's death and about a year after the last colony member left, Governor Lowden died. The park is named for Governor Frank Lowden. Soon after his death in 1943, the legislature appropriated $25,000 toward the cost of a memorial for him. The citizens of Oregon and the surrounding area matched the amount, thinking the park would be ideal. Then in 1945, the 207-acre plot of land became Lowden State Park. More than 500,000 visitors go through the park every year. The Park Superintendent in 1986, Leroy Hayes, reported that, "The busiest times for the staff are Memorial Day weekend and the first weekend in

October." Those who come in the fall come to see the gorgeous fall colors throughout the park and river bluffs.

The Eagles Nest Tree was a big attraction at Lowden until it fell in May 1972. The gnarled Red Cedar had been a popular climbing tree and discouraged the eagles from nesting there any longer. Despite the hardships the tree had gone through, it was estimated to be at least 650 years old when it finally fell. It now lies in a garden of prairie plants native to the area.

Another point of interest is the Northern Illinois University (NIU), now known as Lorado Taft Field Campus established in 1951. Sixty-six acres were transferred to NIU and are used for year round natural science courses in an outdoor education program. "The Lorado Taft Field Campus has earned a national and international reputation as an outstanding outdoor education center." By far, the most famous attraction is the Black Hawk Statue sculpted by Lorado Taft from 1908 to 1910 with the help of John Prasuhn, his student. The concrete statue was meant to depict a heroic Indian looking over the Rock River Valley. One night he and his colleague were standing cross armed looking out over the river. He thought of the Native Americans who had probably enjoyed the same view for generations; so he began sketching. The statue was not meant to be associated with a famous Indian chief, but is today. The statue is "Very proud and majestic, it's easy to see why people consider it to be Chief Black Hawk," wrote Heinz. The statue is 48 feet tall and stands 125 feet above the river. It weighs about 100 tons and is believed to be the second largest concrete monolithic statue in the world.

Parks were begun to get away from the worsening conditions of the city during the Industrial Revolution. We are lucky to live in a state with the reputation of having

some of the best park systems in America. One of these parks is Lowden State Park in northern Illinois. It has a rich history and much to enjoy, especially the view over the Rock River. Parks are a place to get away from our busy lives and enjoy nature, and hopefully will continue to bring joy to people forever. [From The Bicentennial Commission of Ogle County, "Parks, Camps, Recreation." *Bicentennial History of Ogle County*; The Book Committee, "Lowden Memorial State Park," *The Story of Oregon, Illinois*; Rod Fensom and Julie Foreman, "Ogle County," *Illinois*; Evelyn Heinz, "Historical Lowden State Park," *Illinois Magazine*; Illinois Department of Natural Resources, "State Parks-Lowden State Park," <www.dnr.state.il.us/lands/landmgt/PARKS/RI/LOWDENSP.HTM.> (Sept. 29, 2006); Illinois Department of Natural Resources, *Lowden State Park*; Illinois Parks and Recreation, "History of Illinois Park Districts: Decade by Decade," <www.lib.niu.edu/ipo/1997/ip970923.html>. (Sept. 29, 2006); Liz. Rickert, *Oregon Sculpture Trail*; and Suzanne Winckler, "Illinois." *The Smithsonian Guide to Historic America*.]

Dickson Mounds: Past, Present, Future

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Leaves are falling; in the distance a giant hill is being built. The scene is one Dickson Mounds State Park uses to teach visitors of early Illinoisans. Through education, the museum preserves over 10,000 years of history. Burial grounds, artifacts, and history combine to educate and preserve the history of Illinois, and more is taught every day. Illinois' history will be preserved for many more years. Due to the founding, excavation, and history of Dickson Mounds State Park, Illinoisans can discover and appreciate the early Native Americans' culture.

The history of Dickson Mounds started over ten thousand years ago when the first Native Americans moved to Illinois. However, the people of the Woodland Era built the first mounds. These mounds served as the first cemeteries in Illinois. Mounds often became mass graves because people only lived for about twenty-four years. As scientists now know, many people died of diseases that were unpreventable at the time. The Woodland people had one of the first well-developed cultures. Some bodies show proof of cremation and wrapping of bodies preserving the bodies. Many mounds show modern practices, such as cemetery-like graves with bodies in a face-up position. There is religious importance in burial patterns. The Woodland Native Americans believed people must make a spiritual journey to reach the afterlife. They could bring tools and supplies that were buried with their bodies. Many tools have been found showing possible jobs in the society. The Native Americans used digging tools found along with baskets to move the earth into mounds. Arrowheads were also discovered showing the

importance of hunting to the people of early Illinois. Possible sources of food include the bison and other large mammals, deer, and small mammals that live in Illinois. About 850 A.D., the Mississippian Native Americans replaced the Woodland Native Americans. The Mississippian people were known as the mound builders because they built most of the mounds that exist today. Mississippian mounds were mainly foundations for temples or the houses of important people. The Mississippians also added to the burial mounds of the Woodland people. One accomplishment of the Mississippians was the organization of politics and society. A high leader and a council of accompanying leaders comprised their government.

Since the building of the mounds, many changes have befallen upon the mounds. When first discovered, residents recognized their difference. The residents knew the mounds were built in layers. Today, farmland has surrounded the site of Dickson Mounds State Park. The town of Lewistown, Illinois, was built near to the site. In the future, it is planned that Dickson Mounds State Park will be renovated in order to educate visitors more efficiently. One possible addition would be the construction of a walk-through mound. In it imitation remains and real artifacts would be in put into the mounds. Visitors could walk into a mound with marked remains and artifacts to explore a potentially interactive exhibit. Another possible change to the museum grounds would be an onsite research center. There, professional archeologists could train students while they are living in dorms on the grounds. These students could help set up audio tours to help those who have troubled eyesight or those who are auditory learners learn about the historical significance of Dickson Mounds. In the Dickson Mounds area, a nature conservancy group is planning a restoration of the land surrounding the park to its

original wetland state to help visitors understand the setting of early Illinois and how it looked when the mounds were built, thus more effectively educating visitors about Illinois' past.

After the War of 1812, the area was given away as a military tract. This is when the Dickson family moved into Illinois. While preparing the land for farming, many residents discovered artifacts. The mounds remained undisturbed until after the Civil War. In the 1860s, William Dickson was clearing trees and brush one day when he unearthed human bones and other artifacts.

After William Dickson's findings, Thomas Dickson disturbed the burial sites while doing work on a house. Thomas Dickson destroyed a section of a burial mound. Because of the findings of his ancestors, Dr. Don Dickson excavated a site of the mounds. In the 1920s, he found bones and artifacts, and researched the culture and life of those found. Dickson recognized the importance of his research and established a museum to educate visitors on ancient Illinoisans. Dickson showcased artifacts as well as remains and the knowledge gained from the mounds. Research has taken place in order to learn about the culture and causes of death of the people. Most people died of diseases such as arthritis, osteomyelitis, rickets, tumors, and pyorrhea. Dickson made a special effort to preserve and exhibit grave offerings and artifacts found to show the burial practices of early Illinoisans. Today, the museum hopes to preserve the remaining mounds. At one time there were over ten thousand mounds in the Illinois River Valley, but only two thousand survive. Through education, Dickson Mounds hopes to end the destruction of mounds, and save Illinois' history. To expand its outreach, Dickson Mounds is utilizing new technologies, such as the Internet, to reach a larger audience.

Through new and developing technologies, the museum's ability to tell stories is protecting the past better.

Dickson Mounds State Park has influenced the history of Illinois, and today it continues to do so. Archeologists at Dickson Mounds are making discoveries that change the way we look at Illinois' past. Bison bones were discovered on the site, making archeologists reconsider when bison first lived in Illinois. An arrowhead found in the body of the bison suggests the diet of Native Americans. Dickson set standards for archeology in his 1920 excavation, which are still in use. Dickson Mounds has helped bring tourism to the area. Dickson Mounds used to bring in 70,000 people annually. Though only 30,000 to 35,000 people come annually now. Dickson Mounds helps bring 100,000 visitors to Lewistown annually. This helps strengthen the economy. Dickson Mounds has also started using multimedia exhibits to help educate efficiently with younger students. In the future, the museum hopes to reinvigorate Don Dickson's legacy for the education of people, young and old.

Due to the founding, excavation, and history of Dickson Mounds State Park, Illinoisans can discover and appreciate the early Native Americans' culture. Through different means of communication, the museum is expanding its outreach. Though much of the information being taught is over 10,000 years in the making, Illinoisans are discovering the impact it has on Illinois today. With ongoing excavations as well as artifacts already found, Dickson Mounds State Park is preserving the history of Illinois. Every day more people learn of Illinois' past, saving it for future generations. [From Alan D. Harn, *The Prehistory of Dickson Mounds*; Lori Rood, *Cahokia Mounds*; Brenda Rothert, "Dickson Mounds Plans Revitalization," *The Peoria Journal Star*, Sept. 3, 2006;

and Carol D. Shull, The Mound Builders. National Park Service.

<http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/travel/mounds/builders.htm>. (Sept. 9, 2006).]

Starved Rock State Park

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State Parks stand for many things in United States history. People who believed that the history and beauty of nature should be preserved, promoted parks. State parks were not merely used for a way to escape the bustle of the city; they provided genuine insight into nature and the history of the state. Illinois has many great state parks that deliver both history and nature to all that visit them. One of the best state parks in Illinois that supplies both history and beautiful nature is Starved Rock State Park.

"I have stood upon Starved Rock and gazed for hours upon the beautiful Landscape spread out before me. The undulating plains, rich in their verdure; the rounded hills beyond, clad in their forest livery; the gentle stream, pursuing its noiseless way to the Mississippi and the Gulf, all in harmonious association, make up a picture over which the eye delights to linger, and when to these are added recollections of the heroic adventurers who first occupied it; that her the banner of France so many years floated freely in the winds; that here was civilization while all around was barbaric darkness, - the most intense and varied emotions cannot fail to be awakened", this is how Sydney Breese described his encounter with Starved Rock. The park is filled with spectacular overlooks along the Illinois River, crystalline waterfalls in eighteen different canyons, and vertical walls of moss-covered stone. The fascinating rock formations were shaped by glacial melt water hundreds of millions of years ago. However, it is not just beauty that makes the park, it is the history that took place in the park that makes it one of the most important state parks in Illinois. As many guidebooks on Starved Rock say,

"There's history to explore, as well as amazing sights to see, and endless activities to enjoy."

The Illinois State Parks Commission established Starved Rock State Park in 1911 but the majority of the history occurs centuries before the park was officially fixed. From the sixteenth century through the seventeenth century, a sub-group of five thousand to seven thousand Illiniwek, the Kaskaskia, had a village across the Illinois River from what is now the current site of the state park. In 1673 the first Europeans came to the area. They were Louis Jolliet, Father Jacques Marquette and five companions who were exploring the Illinois River. After their discovery, Robert LaSalle, who Eaton G. Osman, author of *Starved Rock*, describes as "the greatest name in the history of French exploration in North America after Champlain", came to the land in the1680s. In 1682 he built Fort St. Louis on top of the 125-foot bluff because of its commanding strategic position above the last rapids of the Illinois River. In the early 1700s the French abandoned the fort because of war pressure with the Iroquois. Osman describes the scene upon LaSalle's return to the wrecked fort, "Everything was in was waste . . . LaSalle knew it was the work of the Iroquois." The ruined fort then became a safe haven for fur trappers. However, by 1720, the fort was completely destroyed by a fire. This explains some of the early European history of the area, but how did the rock get its name? Legend has it that an Illiniwek killed Pontiac, chief of the Ottawa tribe. During one of the battles that happened to avenge his killing, a band of Illiniwek, under attack by a force of Potawatomi, allies of the Ottawa, sought refuge atop the 125-foot sandstone bluff. The Ottawa and Potawatomi surrounded the bluff and held their ground until the

Illiniwek died of starvation, since they had no way of getting provisions, thus giving it the name "Starved Rock."

Many, hearing of this legend, came to Starved Rock. Osman describes the many people as, "The modern Starved Rock beleaguers come arrayed in outing suits and picnic habiliments; and where once the Frenchmen braved the terrors of savagery, his nineteenth century successors, born of all nations, now invade the land to make al fresco holiday." In the 1800s private promoters attempted to make this area the "Gibraltar of the West", which failed. It was then later developed into a recreational center with a dance pavilion, hotel and swimming pool. In 1911 the Illinois State Parks Commission bought the area known as Starved Rock and turned it into a state park, becoming the second state park in Illinois. Osman says they did this so that "the great historic site will be preserved from the destructive attrition of pure commercialism that was ruining its physical beauty, and the Rock will forever stand as a monument to the indomitable LaSalle . . .which has preserved to the people of the Illinois Valley." The Illinois State Parks Commission was originally stationed at Starved Rock. The Commission decided that too much of the park was being eroded. They built planks and stairways around Starved Rock State Park to prevent the effects of erosion from human beings. After the commission decided that they wanted to protect the area they found the deed to the land and purchased the 2,630 acres adjacent to 582 acres of nature preserve. They bought the park to preserve the land and history for future generations.

Starved Rock State Park today is visited by many in Illinois and many other states. It provides information into Illinois's past, shares the beauty of the natural world, and provides a way to get away from the business and relax. The history of the park was

filled with bloodshed, failure, and French influence. The history of Illinois just would not have been the same if not for the Starved Rock area. [From Sydney Breese, *An Early History of Illinois*; Kristen Filipek, Kristin Friant, and Matt Richards, Starved Rock State Park and Surrounding Areas, "Starved Rock," <www.jove.goel.niu.edu>. (Oct. 15, 2006); Ellen Flahive, "Starved Rock," *Illinois State Parks Magazine*; Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs, Bureau of Tourism and FCB/Impact. Illinois Weekend Getaway Guide, Getaway 18; Illinois Department of Natural Resources, "Starved Rock," <www.dnr..state.il.us>. (Oct. 15, 2006); Ed Lina, S. Plucker-Kay, L. Roehrick, *Brevet's Historical Markers and Sites*; Barb McCaig, Margie McCaig, and Lynn Soli. "Gibraltar of the West," Illinois Parks and Forests; Eaton G. Osman, *Starved Rock*; Village of North Utica, "Tourist Attractions," "Starved Rock," <www.utica-il.com/-22k>. (Oct. 15, 2006); and Ray D. Wilson, Illinois Historical Tour Guide.]

Fort Massac: Reliving History

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In Illinois, as well as the rest of America, some of the most historically significant sites that still stand are the forts of the revolution. The memories of ancient battles and past heroes are woven into these forts' very foundations. Among the great old forts stands Fort Massac, a legend of Illinois's history. Fort Massac's legacy is filled with important events, including its transformation from a fort into the first park in the Illinois state park system. Today, Fort Massac State Park is known for its historic re-enactments and family activities. However, the fort's past is just as important as its present.

Even before Fort Massac was formally founded, Native Americans utilized its strategic location along the Ohio River. In the *Emigrant's Guide or Pocket Geography of the Western States and Territories* (1818) it is stated that:

> This fort stands on a high dry bank, and commands a delightful view of the Ohio. The great breadth of the river, and the long and easy bend it makes, without any obstructions for 11 miles above and 5 below, gives a most noble perspective to the eye, and a sentiment of admiration to the imagination.

With such a commanding view of the Ohio River, it is logical that many different forces have taken advantage of the fort's position. One such force, led by the Spanish conquistador Hernando DeSoto, set up a defense at this site. After exploring much of South America, DeSoto landed an expedition on the Florida coast in 1539. From this point, DeSoto led the biggest expedition of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries through

the modern day United States. While traveling through what would later be named Illinois, this expedition used the location that would become Fort Massac to set up a temporary defense against hostile Indian tribes. After DeSoto's force left the fort to continue their exploration of the surrounding lands, Indians again took advantage of this defensive position.

Various Indian tribes utilized the fort's location until the French gained control of it in 1757, during the French and Indian War. At this time, the French made this fortress into the Fort De L'Ascension. To honor their Minister of Colonial Affairs, the French renamed it Fort Massiac, which was later anglicized to Fort Massac. After the French and Indian War ended, the fortification was burned by the Chickasaw tribe, and rebuilt by Britain's Forty-Second Royal Highland Regiment. The British left this fort weakly garrisoned however, making this important location vulnerable during the Revolutionary War.

During the Revolution, Colonel George Rogers Clark realized the importance of Fort Massac. Clark, whose brother later became famous in the Lewis and Clark expedition, devised a plan to capture Fort Massac and used it as a strategic base of operations in Illinois. Important figures such as Patrick Henry and Thomas Jefferson supported Clark's plan, and Clark was then promoted to colonel in the Revolutionary Army.

By 1778, the revolutionary forces already controlled much of Illinois. The only major challenge that remained was to capture Kaskaskia, the capitol of the Illinois Territory, from the British. In June 1778, Clark led his regiment of Rebels to British-controlled Fort Massac and captured it. From this strategic position Clark regrouped his

men, and led them to Fort Kaskaskia in two separate regiments. In a brilliant maneuver, Clark had his two regiments approach Kaskaskia from opposite directions, making his forces seem much larger than they were. By using this tactic, Clark captured Kaskaskia from the British without firing a short. With this great task completed, Clark was able to capture all of Illinois for the United States. Fort Massac was a vital piece of Clark's plan to gain control of the Illinois Territory, and in this way, it played a small but important role in the American Revolution.

With such deep history, the Daughters of the American Revolution deemed it necessary to preserve Fort Massac for future generations. This group bought 24 acres surrounding the fort in 1903, which the state of Illinois bought on November 5, 1908, to create the state's first park. Archaeological excavations were conducted around the fort from 1939-1942 and again in 1966, 1970, and 2002. The excavations showed the specific position of each of the forts that had been built on this location, and provided clues to what life had been like there.

Built from the information gathered in these excavations, a reconstruction of the 1802 American fort now stands on the park grounds. Fort Massac State Park's 1,450-acre area is currently comprised of two military barracks, three block houses, officer's quarters, a large well, and a stockade. This replica of the old Fort Massac was built to promote learning of revolutionary times and ways of life. In order to accomplish this task, Fort Massac has several "living history weekends" every year and is also host to the Fort Massac Encampment for two days of each October. More than 80,000 visitors come to the Fort Massac Encampment annually to experience recreations of life in the 1700s, as well as to perform in battle reenactments. The fort is also open to the public every day

and educational or tour groups can be scheduled for the site. The park provides an educational, family-friendly environment with available picnicking, hiking, and camping. Hunting and fishing are also allowed in some areas, and boating is permitted along the Ohio River. With its modern attractions and fascinating heritage, Fort Massac is notable in Illinois's development.

Fort Massac's history, as well as the activities offered by the park, help to make it one of the state's most important landmarks. Both beautiful and meaningful, Illinois's first state park has been, and will continue to be, important as a learning and entertainment center in southern Illinois. [From Anonymous, *Emigrant's Guide or Pocket Geography of the Western States and Territories*; Fern Armstrong and Frank Leonard, *Short History of Fort Massac: Two Essays*; Lynn Bailey and John Fortier, *Historian's Report Concerning the Feasibility of a Reconstruction At Fort Massac State Park, Illinois*; Victor Hogg, Margaret K. Brown and John B. Fortier, *Historic Fort Massac*; Charles Kelly, John Fortier and Lynn R. Bailey, *Fort Massac Project*; George W. May, *Massac Pilgrimage*; Paul Maynard, *Summary Report of the Archaeological Research and Preliminary Restoration, Fort Massac State Park, Metropolis, Illinois*; Rose M. Scott, *George Rogers Clark [a Poem, Together with an Account of the Sesqui-Centennial Held at Metropolis, Ill., June 28, 29, 30 and July 1, 1928*; and Sourbadon Verges, *Translation of French Specifications for Fort Massac, Illinois, on the Ohio River, 1745*.]